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COUNTY COURT PRACTICE.

SCROODGBY v. SCROODGBY.

TURNING over a pile of old reporting-books the other day, I came upon a rather full note of a county court case which occasioned much amusement at the time of its coming off, and which I venture to characterise as too much out of the common to merit permanent oblivion in pencillings which none can decipher but myself; I therefore reproduce it in this place, and offer it to the public as a comical contribution to the annals of the minor jurisprudence of England.

Pigchester is not a large town even now that it has become a sort of asylum for mad little railways from all the least populous portions of the kingdom; but at the time to which my notes refer, it was delightfully small, and, in a material or mensurational point of view, unprogressive. Nevertheless, it abounded in volcanic elements—socially considered. With a population of a round dozen of thousands or so, it contained I am afraid to say how many parishes with their respective churches. In the largest of these parishes, Dissent had a traditional foot-hold, which neither the cathedral-like church nor the zeal of its officers had been able to loosen. On the contrary, the Puritan party had of late years waxed in vigour as well as in numbers to such an extent as to swamp the supporters of church-rates in vestry assembled. The income of the church, considering its size and central position, was pitifully small; and cutting off its church-rate was as bad as cutting off the water-supply from a household such as your humble servant may be imagined to preside over. However, there was no help for it. Remonstrance and appeal were alike ineffectual; the rate was refused again and again, or rather—to write history as it ought to be written, that is, without any mistakes—a farthing rate was uniformly carried at the Easter vestry, and some strong-minded nonconformist was sure to be elected as ratepayer's churchwarden, to see that the farthing rate was properly applied to the reduction of a lingering repairs debt. To aggra-

vate the pecuniary embarrassments of the venerable mother of the Pigchester parishes, the sanitary reformers contrived to shut up all the burial-grounds in the town, St Ursula's, of course, among the rest. This was very sad; for the graveyard was very large and far from full. But the Home Secretary said the word, and St Ursula's verdant sods were thenceforth sacred to purposes of intermittent pasture on market-days—a service of exceedingly small revenue. Furthermore, Pigchester, with a lively sense of its coming greatness as a junction of junctions, had gotten for itself a commission of improvement under the sign-manual of our then youthful sovereign; and had developed the spending power of the said commission at such a rate that the shilling in the pound, to which it was tethered by the terms of its charter, barely sufficed to pay for chloride of lime, after satisfying the interest and sinking fund of a two-thousand-pound debt at the local bank. What was to be done? Previously—and by tacit consent of the various parties interested—all public buildings, such as the Infirmary, the Asylum, the churches, and the chapels, had been exempt. Now it had become necessary to cancel the exemption. Several of the churches and all the chapels got off very well, because the rate was proportioned to the lineal measure of the ground abutting on thoroughfares; but poor St Ursula had a lineal measurement as long as an ordinary High Street, and its assessment yielded, or, at all events, was reckoned to yield, not far short of forty pounds per annum to the improvement rate. When application was first made for this modest 'requisition,' the authorities pleaded that they had lost both church-rates and burial-fees, so that they really had no funds out of which to defray the new levy. Naturally, there was a disposition in high quarters to remit the demand; but this got wind, and the lovers of justice pure and simple declared that they would quash the rate at quarter-sessions, if such weak-minded leniency were shewn to St Ursula. Consequently, the improvement commissioners had no alternative but to instruct their surveyor to proceed against the churchwardens of St Ursula's in the

county court. Now, a fine sense of equity required that the action-at-law should incommode the popular churchwarden rather than the honest nominee of the rector, who, good soul, would have been only too thankful, and had always done his best, to get a church-rate. But there is an irony in fate, and it so happened that the popular guardian of the farthing rate was in Rome, or Jerusalem, or some other resting-place of pilgrims still farther away from Pigchester. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to make Scroodgby, the rector's warden, defendant to the suit. Very good, and simple enough; but unfortunately Scroodgby happened to be surveyor to the Board, and all suits must run in his name.

Here was a pretty fix! Scroodgby turned the matter over in his own mind and in the minds of other people, but often as he tossed it up, so to speak, it presented the same aspect. There was no way out of it but to go in for self-prosecution. He tried to get the cause entered under the description of *Regina v. The Churchwardens of St Ursula*; but the clerks of the court resented the disloyal fiction. Then he suggested that the improvement commissioners should be entered as plaintiffs. The officials were inexorable. Either the commission had no *locus standi*, or the clauses which gave them one must have appointed a person—a compound of blood, bones, and brains, such as secretary or surveyor—to occupy the *locus aforesaid*. Scroodgby was at last compelled to admit that Scroodgby was the man; and down he went in the plaint-sheet as plaintiff.

This settled, he dodged a little about the defendant. Why not put Mr Hayfork's name in as defendant? Reflection suggested that it would take three months or more to serve the summons on Mr Hayfork, and another three months for Mr Hayfork to comply with the citation. Meanwhile, the chloride of lime was running short, and the scavengers were becoming riotous for wages, and the local bank was threatening to put bailiffs into all the sewers and water-pipes of the town for arrears of interest. There was, indeed, no help for it. The great cause of Scroodgby *versus* Scroodgby was licked into shape; and before Mr S. had had time to light his pipe on the domestic hearth, in order that he might complacently review his position and arguments as plaintiff in the momentous suit, an ominous knock at his front door brought him face to face with the melancholy fact that he was defendant as well as plaintiff, and that he had to get up a case for both sides with sublime impartiality. At first, he was wholly unequal to the task. He found himself on every occasion behaving with all the one-sidedness of a partisan, till he was positively ashamed of himself, and allowed his stock of inexorable logic to dribble away drop by drop, as it were, till, metaphorically and judicially, he hadn't a leg to stand upon. Nor was he much better off when conning the matter over with his legal advisers. It helped him a little, to be sure, that there were two lawyers instead of only one, and he could generally keep in mind which side he was giving instructions about, by observing that the civil lawyer was an exceedingly rude person, wearing on his blue coat gilt buttons as big as half-crowns; while the ecclesiastical lawyer was a ruder person still, but bare of buttons from head to foot. Each of these gentlemen badgered his unfortunate

victim with insinuations that he was secretly favouring the party for which he was not concerned; both of them preached to him of the double-minded man that was unstable in all his ways; both of them condoled with him because he had not been introduced into the world like the Siamese twins; both of them were in the habit of asking after the health of Mr Scroodgby's scoundrelly double, and of leaving mock-compliments and insincere good wishes for the success of that shadowy personage. In fact, if they had held a consultation on purpose, they could not have secured a more faithful reproduction of each other's gibes, jokes, and sarcasms. As the time of hearing drew on, good Scroodgby's life became a burden to him. He lost the thread of his personal identity. In his interviews with the professional gentlemen concerned in the case, he was continually letting cats out of bags, putting his foot in it, betraying one cause or the other, and, in short, making an awful muddle of the whole business. It became necessary for him to redouble his caution. To avoid confusion, as far as might be practicable, he arranged to sit on one side of his fireplace when Buttons was to the fore, and on the other side when his buttonless adviser was in presence. In the one case, he smoked a 'churchwarden'; in the other, he sported a meerschaum. With Buttons, he revelled in rum; and with the buttonless limb of the law he held counsel over colourless tippie. With these and many other 'aids to reflection,' he managed to scramble along to the day for putting in his double appearance, without becoming absolutely daft.

Regular as the moon, and a good deal more so, is the county court, except in the month of August. Dragged by a double chain, Scroodgby found himself at last uncouched, upright, shivering and shaving in front of a mirror which reflected a face he scarcely recognised, but which he supposed must be the face of his double. He thought it hard that he should be expected to shave two men gratis, and wear two suits of clothes to suit the twofold character of the suit. But the experience of the morning shewed that he was abandoning himself to causeless fears. His reasonable anxieties were amply sufficient to perturb a mind already prostrate with internal dissension; and he confined his energy and ingenuity, in the main, to practical difficulties. Such precautions as were not calculated to offend the dignity of the court, he ventured to take. For example, he tied all the documents appertaining to the claim with red tape, and ensconced them in a red bag. For the defence, he had recourse to blue worsted, both as to the bag and as to the grouping of its contents; and bearing one bag under one arm, and the other under the other arm, he waddled his way to the court-house. On reaching the precincts of the place of judgment, he was greeted with derisive cheers by the draggle-tailed mob of penniless women who were wearily waiting their turn to be scolded and judged for getting into the books, and especially into the black books, of M'Sawney, the too-confiding draper from over the Borders. They knew Mr Scroodgby well as their unrelenting persecutor before the justices of the peace in the discharge of his duties, and were glad to learn that he was now as one of themselves—a mere defendant on a county court summons. They had some dim guess that his position as

defendant was somehow rather confused; but not exactly understanding the matter, they decided to look upon their ancient foe as in a fairish way of getting thirty days in the jug; and so they mocked him.

As soon as the meed of justice had been awarded to the virtuous M'Sawney and his recalcitrant customers, to the number of a couple of hundred or so, it was notified to the judge by the clerk of the court that the case No. 212 was likely to prove troublesome; and his Honour, like some old war-horse that scents the battle from afar, ordered precedence to be given to the cause of Scroodgby v. Scroodgby, provided both parties agreed. Agreement having been argued from silence, the clerk called Scroodgby v. Scroodgby; the usher of the court opened the door, and bawled out: 'Scroodgby's witnesses all ready;' and a red-faced policeman exclaimed in a fatherly way: 'Now, then, Scroodgby's people, here you are; come this way; look sprightly.' And all the while both parties to the suit—both Scroodgby plaintiff and Scroodgby defendant—were quietly seated on one and the same chair, infolded within one and the same black satin waistcoat, and if not in perfect amity with each other, at all events externally reconciled and peaceful.

'Family quarrel, of course,' said his Honour, as, hoisting and poising his double eye-glass, he bent over the papers before him. 'Eh, ah; what's this? This is not it, Mr Snipe; this is 'The Improvement Commissioners of Pichester v. The Churchwardens of St Ursula, situate in Pichester aforesaid.''

'It's all right, sir. The same thing, sir; fuller description, sir; that's all.'

'Eh, what? Well; O yes, yes; I see. Well, get on; don't keep me waiting all day;' and he went on skimming, and, as it were, creaming the gist of the case. Presently he lifted up his head, and glancing at Mr Scroodgby, who by this time had betaken himself to the plaintiff's box, said: 'Well, well, get on; don't waste the time of the court.' Then taking a side-glance over his glasses at the defendant's box, he exclaimed: 'Stop, stop, sir; where's defendant?'

'I'm defendant, sir, please your Honour.'

'You, defendant, sir? Then you ought to know better at your time of life than to put yourself in a false position.'

'Alas, your Honour!'

'Alas, fiddlestick-ends, sir. Go into your proper box, sir.'

'Will you hear me, sir?'

'No, I won't, sir. Go at once, sir, or I'll commit you for contempt.'

Again there was no help for it. Amidst the suppressed laughter of the court, the worthy but agitated Scroodgby gathered up his papers, his blue bag and his red bag, and shuffled out of court into the crowded lobby, that he might work his way round to the defendant's box, and so obey the behest of the judge. His Honour went on 'creaming' the case until the confusion had subsided, and finding that he had been obeyed, he smiled benignly, and said: 'Now, then, plaintiff, we can begin;' but turning his glance toward the vacant box which Mr Scroodgby had so reluctantly relinquished, he perceived that something was amiss.

'Where is the plaintiff? Do you want to drive

me mad?—Call the plaintiff, Tipstaff, and take him up, if you can't find him.' (His Honour came from over the deep green sea, from an island that is said to be eternally verdant.)

'I'm the plaintiff, please your Honour,' whined out Mr Scroodgby.

'You, sir! Did you not tell me you were the defendant, sir? What do you mean, sir? Do you dare to trifle with the court, sir?' And his Honour waxed rosier and rosier about the gills, and about the large lobes of his massively intellectual ears.

'Suffer me to explain, your Honour.'

'Not a word, sir; not one word, till you are in your proper place. If you don't know how to behave in my court, sir, I'll take some method of teaching you.'

With a heavy sigh and drooping head, Mr Scroodgby gathered up the paraphernalia of his famous suit, and shuffled off by the route which had led to his second 'false position.' He made haste to put himself right with the irritated judge, who, on his part, never doubting that his remonstrances and threats would produce their desired effect, buried his nose and his attention once more in the papers on his desk. After a moment or two, he elevated his judicial head to the level of the situation, and with much placidity observed: 'Now, I hope we shall be able to proceed without further— Eh! Hollo! What's this? Where's the defendant?'

'Here, sir; please, sir,' meekly bolted out poor Scroodgby.

'Here, sir! What do you mean, sir? This passes sufferance. I will teach you, sir, that my court is not to be turned into a comic opera with impunity.—Tipstaff, do your duty; arrest that man.'

At these words, restraint snapped; the whole assembly broke out into loud and long guffaws. Peal upon peal of laughter burst like a cannonade of insult upon the embodiment of justice on the bench, and upon the quivering wretch in the clutch of the tipstaff. His Honour swelled, and flamed, and almost died with rage. The generally demure clerk was well nigh as purple as the judge, for he was choking down his ungovernable laughter with compressed and successive mouthfuls of his stuff gown. But his violent remedies were at length effectual. After a tremendous fit of coughing, he managed to get sufficiently on to his legs to hand a paper up to the judge's desk, on which he had scrawled the information that the two Scroodgbies were one and the same individual, and that in one character he was plaintiff, and in the other defendant. Gradually order and comparative silence were restored; and his Honour magnanimously gave the order for Scroodgby's release from the custody of the tipstaff, adding: 'And I trust, sir, this will be a warning to you, and that you will be guilty, or at least, I should say, chargeable no more. You are now free, and you leave this court without a stain'—

'He mustn't go yet, your Honour,' explained the clerk.

'Thank you, Mr Snipe. I mean, of course, that he is now free to proceed with this absurd and troublesome case. Please to proceed accordingly.'

The troublesome case turned out, after all, to lie in a nut-shell. After hearing the merest outline from Mr Scroodgby, now as plaintiff and now as

defendant, he permitted him to cross-examine himself in a clumsy sort of way for a few minutes, and then pulling him up suddenly, he dismissed the whole business by remarking that Mr Scroodgy, defendant, had fallen into one of the commonest errors of the sort of people who attended that court in the character of defendant. It was no new plea that a defendant had no means of paying the debt; but it was in this case, as in all other cases, altogether untenable. He (the judge) had not been either enabled or commissioned to provide the wherewithal to pay people's debts, but merely to see that they were paid, or to punish for non-payment. Nor was he bound to suggest in any particular case how an unfortunate defendant might possibly raise the necessary wind; but as this was a peculiar case, he might perhaps be allowed, without prejudice to his freedom in ordinary suits, to volunteer an opinion, that if Mr Scroodgy found his churchwarden pocket empty, he might possibly discover the needful in the pocket reserved for his salary as inspector, or surveyor, or engineer, or whatever he called himself. If so, then, on transferring the sum of thirty-seven pounds, and costs in the cause, from the one pocket to the other, he would obtain the means of satisfying the judgment of the court, which he begged to say was for Scroodgy the plaintiff as against Scroodgy the defendant. (Loud applause.)

'How about costs, your Honour?'

'What do you mean, sir?'

'Am I to charge my usual fee twice over, sir?'

'Certainly not, sir; you are exorbitant. One-half of you has lost the cause; the other half has won. Plainly, it is only the latter half that is entitled to the usual professional fee.'

'But is not my fellow-churchwarden equally liable with me, sir?'

'I know nothing of your fellow-churchwarden, as you call him, unless his name is Scroodgy; and, moreover, I'm not going to trespass on the functions of the bar, as I should do if I presented you with advice gratis. I have given you what you wanted. You pressed for judgment against the defendant: this you have got. What more can you want? I sincerely hope you will shew him no mercy, for he is evidently a double-faced person.—Call the next case.'

A WOMAN'S VENGEANCE.

CHAPTER XIX.—A TERRIBLE INFANT.

ON their honeymoon in the Lake Country, Arthur and Helen were as happy as the days were long; and the wet days, with which that beautiful region is so plentifully dowered, were long. On the fine ones, there was always a hill to be climbed, from which four-and-twenty distinct sheets of water were to be seen; or a row on the lake to be taken to some point, from which four-and-twenty distinct hills could be counted; but when the sheets of water came down perpendicularly and hid the hills, it became a little dull within doors. Our ancestors seem to have had a great liking for inns, and that too when no modern improvements in the way of *table-d'hôtes* and croquet-grounds made inn-life social; but why they should have done so, is a mystery. They drank a good deal, it is true, and perhaps the reflection, that they were stopping at a place where no remonstrance was likely to be made upon the amount of

liquor they imbibed, was grateful to them; else, there is certainly an atmosphere of discomfort about even the best regulated hotels, that causes, if not discontent, at least restlessness and ennui. To be confined to the coffee-room, or even to the public reading-room (when there is one), for a whole day, is a melancholy experience; and even if you have with you your own materials for business or amusement, you cannot use them there effectually.

Of course, our bride and bridegroom had a bower of their own to sit in, where they could be 'all in all to one another;' but even there, a day-long down-pour produced depressing effects. Helen would sometimes send forth her Arthur, like the dove of old, to see whether the waters were subsiding; or if they were obviously not doing so, suggest to him that he should take a walk without her, since she was sure he must be getting ennuyed, shut up alone with her all day. And though he gallantly denied that (as he was expected to do), he took his walk, not wholly without a sense of emancipation. Or sometimes, she would say, good-naturedly: 'Why not have a game at billiards, darling?' and he would go into the hotel pool-room, and stay there for several games; and it was curious how much more quickly the time passed there than it did in their private parlour. But this, perhaps, if the truth were told, is the history of all honeymoons, more or less. However it may be with woman, man cannot live on sugar-plums for a whole month without occasionally getting a little tired of them. The couples who earn that flitch of bacon at Dunmow, yearly, must be of angelic tempers, or else (and which is more consonant with human experience) great fibbers; for they make oath that they have never had so much as 'a tiff,' 'a breeze,' 'a squabble'—the very number of synonyms for the thing shew how universally prevalent it is. That the quarrels of lovers are the renewings of love, we learn even from the Latin grammar; and if there is no quarrel, how is love to be renewed? 'Tiffs' are the very salt of the ocean of love, without which it would 'go bad,' as the housekeepers say—become utterly flat and insipid. A man of sense likes his wife (so to speak) to have a kick in her, and *vice versa*; and unless this is the case, men are but tyrants, and women termagants. If any fault could be found in the relations between Mr and Mrs Arthur Tyndall on their wedding-tour, it was, that they were too loving a couple. For Helen worshipped Arthur, and Arthur did his best to prove that he worshipped Helen—nor is it to be supposed that he did not like her very much indeed, because he liked another better. To do him justice, he did not think of that other more than he could possibly help. When the idea obtruded itself, as it sometimes would ('Ah, if it were but Jenny!'), he put it from him with a sense of shame, and was doubly attentive to his wife, by way of penance. Then, if only tolerably happy himself, he made Helen perfectly so; walking beside her pony as she rode up Skiddaw, and stopping it whenever the view struck him as most favourable to point out to her Glaramara or Scafell; or making her toil a pleasure in some less ambitious ramble on foot, by the aid of his strong arm and tender guidance. They had no 'tiffs,' it was true, at present; but that was his fault. Helen was sometimes not disinclined for them—her nature, indeed, like that of many other excellent women, was tiffy; but he

would never take up the quarrel, however temptingly it was offered for his acceptance.

This was not, as all married people are aware, a healthy state of things. When a man is henpecked, there is generally a pretty good reason for it, which is not to his credit; and similarly, though in a less degree, it is a bad sign if he doesn't take his own part, when attacked by his wife without reason. Helen didn't hurt him much, it is true; she didn't bite him, but she nibbled at him, and he did not resent it. It was enough to make any woman have her suspicions. Fortunately for her own peace of mind, they never hit upon the real explanation, which was (I think) that Arthur felt he had no devotion to spare—no reserve fund of affection upon which he could draw in case of having any heavy balance to make up in the way of discontent and annoyance. If the waiters and the chambermaids in the Lake Country had been asked their opinion upon the subject—and they have a great experience of newly married folk—they would have described Mr and Mrs Arthur Tyndall as 'a fond pair,' but have added their doubts of 'its lasting.' The bridegroom was 'too much of a lamb,' and did not 'assert himself' sufficiently.

The first time that Arthur shewed a determination to have his own way was upon the question of the duration of their tour. He wished it to be prolonged for some days or weeks (in fact, indefinitely); while his wife wanted to go home—to Swansdale. Natural scenery had no great charms for her, and though she enjoyed the lakes immensely with her darling Arthur, she would have enjoyed Lincolnshire equally well under the same circumstances; she was tired of rambling and scrambling; and it was growing late in the season. Above all, she was eager to assume her station as the great lady at Swansdale. Here, in the Lake Country, she was a bride indeed, and as such, a focus of considerable interest; but there were half-a-dozen brides beside herself, who were focuses also. At Swansdale she would be the bride; in her honour, calls would be paid by the county, dinner-parties given, bells set ringing, gravel-paths strewn with flowers; in fact, a great fuss about her, such as is dear to the female heart, would probably be made, and she was impatient for it.

Arthur, on the other hand, dreaded the return home. It seemed to him haunted by Jenny's presence. If she had been dead, and he had wronged her, his conscience could scarcely have smitten him more keenly. The Hall would be a prison to him, for how could he ever leave it, by land or water, secure from meeting her! He would see her (as he had already pictured her) in the organ-loft at church, and come face to face with her in the porch, perhaps, when the service was over. Once out of the Hall grounds, neither path nor stream would be safe from her. Would they meet, for the first time, alone, or in company; and if the latter, would he be with his Helen? And would Jenny speak or not, and what would she say? For her own sake, as well as for his, he wished that she lived miles away from Swansdale. He was resolute never to revive in her, by word or look, the embers of that love that was supposed to have died out between them. Of course, if it had been really dead, he would have had no fear of revivifying it. He knew, in his own case, that it was alive—smouldering, glowing deep within him—and only kept from bursting forth in flame by

the united efforts of several moral fire-engines. Prudence, Gratitude, and Right Feeling pumped cold water upon it at the least sign of danger, and kept it under for the present; but they could not put it out. They worked hard, however, to do so. Arthur Tyndall had really done his best to remedy the consequences of his own faithlessness and folly. He had been prepared, on that morning when he stood alone in the summer-house, to take upon himself all the consequences of his own bad behaviour; he had made up his mind to abjure ease and station, and go forth from his native land, alone and poor, in order to discharge by toil what he considered to be a just obligation. In the end, perhaps, he had flattered himself that he might win Jenny also; but this expectation was so exceedingly remote, that it scarcely sweetened the bitter cup he had resolved to drain to the dregs. Then came Helen, as we have seen, and won him back again to herself, chiefly by her self-sacrificing generosity, partly by the passionate devotion which it so evidently evinced.

Having given way to her fond arguments, to which he had not had the courage to oppose the truth, was it possible for him, when, thanks to Jack, he found himself a free man, to turn upon Helen, and reject her for the second time upon a ground that he had not mentioned on the first occasion? At all events, he had not had 'the heart'—the courage, or the brutality—to do so; and he was now a married man. As respected his position as Helen's husband, it is true he had as yet, even in thought, little to reproach himself with; but he feared the temptations that the future might have in store for him. He remembered that meeting on the little bridge with Jenny—her tears and her agony. He knew she loved him then, and feared—what, if he had been a scoundrel, he would have hoped—that she loved him *still*. He was neither so vain nor so base as to anticipate any positive harm to Jenny from his presence at Swansdale; but he felt that it would be bad for her, and bad—or at least embarrassing and inconvenient—for him. Hence it was that he opposed Helen's wish to return home.

'Let us go to London for a week or two first,' suggested he—a temporary reprieve at best; but procrastination seemed always better to Arthur Tyndall than the grappling with a difficulty face to face, and getting it over. 'Let us go to London, dear, and enjoy ourselves a bit, before shutting ourselves up at Swansdale.'

'Ah, you dread shutting yourself up with me alone, Arthur!' was Helen's quick rejoinder. 'You have had enough of my society, I suppose, and require some relief from it, before you can undergo it at home for good; just as people take their children to the sea-side in autumn to give them strength to bear the winter!'

'Really, my dear Helen, I think you have no reason to say that. I am sure I've'—Here he stopped, but not quite in time.

'Been very attentive to me, you were going to say; or, "borne everything very patiently, all this time."'

'Indeed, I was not, Helen. You put words into my mouth. The fact is, this is just the dampest time of the year at the river-side; and you are far from strong, you know, my darling, though you are so plucky, and never own to anything being the matter.'

Helen had one duodecimo ringlet, a mere curling thread of softest silk, that hung down beside her delicate ear, and with this he toyed affectionately as he spoke. Unable as man is to cope with woman, and especially when she is his wife, nature gives to what is paradoxically termed 'the sterner sex' some little arts that serve to mitigate female tyranny; and when Arthur could capture this curl, Helen always became mollified.

'But, my dear Arthur,' said she, smiling, 'that loving argument of yours—which is, however, founded upon a mistake, for I am quite strong—would have equal force to keep me away from Swansdale for months to come.'

'Well, for some time, certainly, my dear.'

'Oh, but that's nonsense! We will stop in town, if you like, for a few days on our way home, but home we must go. So far from its doing me harm, I feel it will do me good. I am quite pining for Swansdale.'

Arthur sighed, but submitted. How could he do otherwise, since he had, in fact, no arguments with which to support his position. Helen, however, was so pleased with him for his prompt capitulation—for she had the sagacity to perceive that it was no mere whim that he had thus given up—that she made up her mind to reward him by letting him invite a bachelor friend or two from town to shoot with him at home.

When they did go to Town, and Arthur expressed no wish to do this, she took it as a sign that he was content with her society, and out of gratitude to him, asked Mr Allardyce herself to Swansdale, expecting to give her husband a joyful surprise. So far from being joyfully surprised, he was considerably annoyed by this, for several reasons. In the first place, it was treating him like a child; or, rather, it was treating him as though he was not master in his own house, a very unpleasant notion to a poor man who has married an heiress: in the second, because his regard for Allardyce was less real than apparent. He stuck to him loyally, because others looked askance at him, as he believed, without cause; but now that he played cards no longer, there was, in fact, scarcely anything in common between them. He still, however, professed a considerable regard for 'Lardy,' which, backed by the influence of the herb valerian, had induced Helen to invite the man; and when she had done so, he could scarcely cancel his wife's act. If she had asked Adair, he would have forgiven her easily enough, though it was doubtful whether Jack could have come, for though the long vacation was not yet over, he was understood to be working hard in his chambers, not so much, perhaps, with the wool-sack in view, as the possession of a certain prize in petticoats, whose name may be guessed.

But Helen had not asked Jack, nor shewn herself so kindly towards him as she might have done, as her husband's oldest friend; and now Jack would doubtless be annoyed, not, indeed, that he had been slighted—for his nature was too magnanimous to harbour 'littlenesses' of that sort—but that the man of whom he entertained so ill an opinion should be asked to Arthur's home. It was true that Arthur did not share that opinion; but he would certainly not have wished to act in the teeth of it, as this invitation made him appear to do. He clung to Jack more than ever now, and would have liked to have had him at

Swansdale beyond everything; but, as we have said, the young barrister's studies forbade it, and also the invitation might have been declined on other grounds. Though Adair was incapable of petty feelings, he had sensibility enough to perceive that his presence was not welcome to his friend's wife; and if he had been less modest, or more acquainted with female character, he would have known the reason of it—namely, that, though she knew his influence over her husband was never used except for good, she was jealous of him.

As it was, it was impossible for him to press his society upon the newly married pair; and Arthur, in resentment at the necessity which kept Jack at a distance, did a thing which was dreadful in Helen's eyes—he left her alone occasionally, and dined with him at the club. It is due to Jack—whose character, though he might never become a judge, was eminently judicious—to say that these proposals emanated from Arthur. Jack foresaw that they would only increase the disfavour with which Mrs Tyndall regarded him, and yet he could hardly refuse to meet his friend, without stating the cause of his disinclination to do so, which would have been ill-judged indeed. He could not, as a bachelor, suggest to his married friend that he ought not to leave his wife—if it might be done in some cases, Arthur at least was the last man in the world to take such advice—and, moreover, it was unnecessary, since his wife was sure to let him know as much. These meetings themselves had not the flavour of the old times. All subjects had then been open for their discussion, if not for their agreement. Now, there were no less than three which were tacitly avoided as topics of conversation—Jenny, Helen, and Allardyce. Moreover, the idea, that when the evening was over, he would be called to account for the manner in which he had spent it, or, what was worse, would be subjected to sideways reflections—'flings'—from his neglected bride, leavened the whole entertainment for Arthur. 'Small matters, indeed,' it may be said, 'to harass an existence which could boast of so many blessings.' But, unhappily, such existences are easily harassed; and it is by such small specks that the 'white radiance' of married life becomes blurred and blackened.

It is not to be supposed, however, even when Arthur found himself seated in the train for Swansdale, next his wife, and opposite to the unwelcome Allardyce, that he wished himself unmarried. When matters have come to *that* pass—when a man or woman allow even to themselves, 'I have made a mistake in my marriage,' the position is serious indeed. No; beset by misgivings as he was with respect to Jenny, and annoyed to find himself hampered for an indefinite time with a not very congenial companion in his whilom friend, Arthur was not so disloyal to his recent vows as to wish himself a free man again. His disagreements with his wife—for they were more serious than 'tiffs,' and had no such healthy influence—were, after all, only occasional, nor was he unconscious that her excessive devotion to himself lay at the bottom of them. When Helen had ceased to be a bride, and become a wife, she would grow more sensible and less exacting; doubtless, they would get on 'all right together when once they were at home.' It must be remembered that Helen had youth and beauty on her side, two powerful allies.

There was one advantage in 'that fellow Allardyce'—so far had 'Lardy' already dropped in the thermometer of friendship—being with them: there was no occasion for him (Arthur) to make conversation; and it was a relief to him, while appearing to listen to that of his wife and friend, to be left alone with his own thoughts. Especially was this the case when the scenery began to grow familiar to his eyes, and suggestive of the past. When they reached the station, from which they had still a few miles to drive, there was Uncle Magus on the platform to greet them; farther on, there was a more public welcome in the shape of a triumphal arch, and a crowd of male and female notables of the village, headed by the rector, who made the happy pair the subject of a pleasant speech.

Helen was delighted by these manifestations of the general good-will, and bowed to left and right, after the pattern of Her Gracious Majesty when acknowledging the plaudits of her subjects. Mr Allardyce, if slightly bored, was cynically amused; and Arthur thought it 'deuced kind of everybody,' and in more polite phrase expressed himself to that effect. Only he looked about him a little nervously, lest his eye should light on Jenny. She was not likely to be present on such an occasion from choice, but she might be so from fear of her absence being misconstrued. At the lodge gates, where they left the carriage, the village school children were assembled, and sang a song composed by some local poet for the occasion. If the words were not of great merit, the sentiments they expressed were very kindly, and Helen was deeply touched by them.

'Who taught you to sing so prettily, my little dear?' inquired she of one chubby-faced little girl, the smallest of the infant choir.

'Jenny Wren, ma'am; leastways not this song, she didn't, but she do most songs.'

'Jenny Wren!' returned Helen, smiling. 'Well, if it had been "Thrush" or "Blackbird," I should have understood it better. Who is this Jenny Wren?'

'It's Miss Renn, please, ma'am, as lives at the lock.'

'Oh, Miss Renn, is it?' said Helen, laughing. 'That is the young woman, is it not, Arthur,' inquired she innocently, 'that Mrs Ralph Tyndall spoke of, when we were on the river?'

'Very likely,' returned Arthur carelessly.

'And why didn't Jenny Wren teach you this pretty song, my child, since she taught you the others?' continued Helen, pursuing her cross-examination of the infant. The publicity of the scene, and the prominent part accorded to her in it, flattered her sense of self-importance and 'position': she was eager to play that rôle of 'Lady Bountiful,' for which, to say truth, she was not quite fitted. It was a pity, at all events, that she began with the juvenile population. She had no experience of children, or, looking at the flushed and embarrassed little countenance that now looked up at her, she would not have pushed her researches in the present case to extremity.

'Come, why didn't Miss Renn, who lives at the lock, teach you this song as well as the others?'

'I'd rather not say,' said the little dot, growing very red indeed.

'Oh, indeed,' answered Helen; 'then we won't ask. I should be sorry, just on the first day of my

coming home, to hear anything wrong of Jenny Wren, or of anybody.'

This magnificent moral patronage flew over the head of her little friend altogether.

'There's nothing wrong with Jenny,' replied she sturdily.

'Then, if there was nothing wrong, I'll give you this silver sixpence for an answer to my question.'

She held up the glittering prize in her gloved fingers.

'Well, then, I *did* hear mother say,' said the little girl, standing on tiptoe for this reward of truth and plain-speaking, 'that it wasn't likely as Jenny would teach a song to welcome you, when she thought to have been in your place herself!'

CHAPTER XX.—WITH THE RECTOR.

The words of the *enfant terrible*, delivered as they were in haste, in view of the promised guerdon, and in a thin bass voice, were heard only by those immediately about her—who fortunately happened to be the four 'gentlefolks.' Helen had the presence of mind to bestow the sixpence, and to say: 'Oh, that was it, was it?' in unembarrassed tones, and then passed on. The child, dazzled by her treasure, thought no more of the words that had procured it, and the public scandal was thereby averted that would certainly have taken place had she repeated them.

As Helen crossed the threshold of the hall, Arthur took her hand, and said: 'Welcome home, Helen.' He would have kissed her, but there was something in her look which repelled and likewise irritated him. He knew what she was annoyed about, of course, but what right had she to be annoyed? Could she suppose that he had kept his affections free for her, even before he had had the opportunity of seeing her? As she did not return the pressure of his hand, he withdrew it, and turned away to acknowledge the good wishes of the servants, most of whom had known him from his youth. He did not see Allardyce step forward in his place, and congratulate her upon the public welcome which she had received. There was a tenderness in his tone which seemed rather to sympathise with misfortune than with triumph, and which brought the colour into her cheek. He had heard it, then. He knew that there was a girl in the village who had thought to have held her place—to have been her Arthur's wife.

'I shall reserve my home-welcome till you come to see me at the cottage, my dear,' said Uncle Magus. 'I hope you and Arthur will not be so wrapped up in one another—though I own it would be pardonable in his case—as to forget the existence of a lone old fellow like myself.'

He too had heard it, then, and was doing his best to knit up the ravelled sleeve of her disquiet. She was grateful to him for that, though chagrined to discover in him another witness to her humiliation, and she thanked him warmly. Then Mr Glyddon came in to say a few gracious words in his private capacity as friend of the family: his felicitations were genuine enough; it was clear he had heard nothing, without doors, to mar the effect of their reception. Perhaps it was mere gratitude to him for this that induced Helen to ask him to dinner; but it was not long before she formed the resolution to turn the rector's presence

to account in the matter that now monopolised her mind, should an opportunity arise for doing so. And such an opportunity did arise. Soon after dinner, Arthur proposed an adjournment to the billiard-room, to which Allardyce and Uncle Magus agreed—the last not without some notion of protecting his nephew from his companion's artifices, for it was not without difficulty that the old gentleman had been convinced by Arthur's arguments that the heir-presumptive of Lord Catamaran was innocent even of actual collusion in that rascality of Paul Jones, while he mistrusted and disliked him exceedingly. He volunteered, therefore, to 'stand and mark' for the two young men; while Mr Glyddon, good, respectable soul, repaired to the drawing-room, to keep Helen company.

She looked up from her seat by the fire—for though it was early to take out the polished bars of the grate, prudent Mrs Glyn, the housekeeper, had done so, and had had the fire lit, lest her new mistress should 'feel the damp' of Swansdale—and pleased to see the rector was not followed by any of the other gentlemen, Helen made room for him beside her.

'I am glad you are come, Mr Glyddon,' said she in her clear tones—so swift and clear that to some ears they sounded almost sharp—'for I wish to have a word with you alone.'

'Indeed,' said the rector, smiling: 'then I am fortunate in having resisted the temptations of the billiard-table.' What Mrs Tyndall had to say to him he concluded must be with reference to that subject which, to do him justice, was seldom absent from his thoughts—the parish.

It was a source of genuine congratulation to him that Arthur had married a woman who held proper views as respected church matters. It would have placed him in an unpleasant position had the wife of his squire and patron been careless on such points, and still worse had she been a zealot of the Exeter Hall type. But as it was, he looked for her sympathy and co-operation. It was not improbable that she now wished to signalise her arrival at Swansdale by some suitable thank-offering: a painted window for the chancel, or a brazen lectern, or even an altar-cloth worked in gold—any or all of which would have been very acceptable. If she should leave the choice to him, he had made up his mind—for, though modest on his own account, there were no bounds to his voracity on behalf of Mother Church—to ask for a new organ. Curiously enough, Helen's first words did have some sort of reference to that very subject, and yet, if she had proposed to turn Uncle Magus' cottage into a Methodist chapel, they could not have astonished him more.

'Tell me, Mr Glyddon, who is this Jenny Wren?'

The poor rector felt himself turn hot and cold in the same instant, like the Russian gentlemen who, travellers tell us, enjoy nothing so much as exchanging a vapour-bath for a roll in the snow; with this difference only, that he did not enjoy it—he had never felt so uncomfortable before. He was incapable of deception; but it was certainly not with perfect ingenuousness that he replied: 'Jenny Wren? Do you mean Miss Alice Renn, the organist?'

'I suppose so,' returned Mrs Tyndall dryly; 'though why it should be the fashion here to call

her "Miss," I cannot tell. She is the daughter of the man at the lock, is she not?'

'Of old Jacob Renn? Yes. He did not always have the lock, however; he used to keep the *Welcome*.'

'So I have heard. But is an innkeeper's daughter considered a lady in these parts? Don't deceive me, Mr Glyddon.' (Her clear voice was sharp now, without doubt.) 'I wish to hear the truth about this girl. It is better I should hear it from your lips than from some common person in the village; for the story, it seems, is in everybody's mouth.'

'What story, Mrs Tyndall?'

'You know what story very well: the story of my husband and this girl. You are the clergyman of the place, and a gentleman; I appeal to you in both capacities. I was told to-day, in all innocence, by a mere child, that this Alice Renn thought to have been Arthur's wife. I want to know how I stand here, and whom I have ousted.'

'My dear Mrs Tyndall, you have ousted nobody. It is quite true that, years and years ago, when Arthur was quite a boy, there was some little'—The rector felt that to hesitate was to be lost, and yet he could not find the word he wished.

'There was some disgraceful attachment formed between them, I conclude,' said Helen coldly.

'Your conclusion is itself disgraceful, madam,' cried the rector, jumping from his seat; 'there was nothing of the sort. I beg your pardon, Mrs Tyndall, but the girl I spoke of has been my parishioner these six years, and has been a great help to me, and—and to the church, and an excellent example to all our young women. Not a shadow of reproach has ever rested upon her character.'

'Indeed,' said Helen, even more coldly than before. She was by no means pleased to be told that Miss Alice Renn was so irreproachable. It is no comfort to a woman who imagines she has a rival, to hear that the said rival is everything a parish priest could wish. She would perhaps even prefer to hear that she was no better than she should be. 'You will assure me next, perhaps, Mr Glyddon, that this *Miss* Alice Renn is not only a paragon of virtue, but also a highly educated and lady-like young woman?'

'Without intending to do so, madam,' answered the rector quietly, 'you have exactly described her character. Her education, it is true, she owes only to herself, but she has read and learned more than falls to the lot of most women; while, if ever the expression, "a lady born," could be rightly applied to any one, it especially befits her.'

'And how was it, then, that this piece of perfection—this highly educated young woman who has never been to school—this innkeeper's daughter who might be taken for a duchess, and who favoured my husband with her modest smiles when he was a boy, was never married to him?'

'If you insist upon having my opinion, Mrs Tyndall,' said the rector bluntly—he was no longer embarrassed now, nor did he feel any need to pick and choose for words—'it was through his own ill-behaviour. They were never engaged, as I understand; no promise ever passed between them; but he made her feel that she had won his heart. Yet when he went abroad, he never wrote to her, never thought of her, or, if he did so, to little purpose, since he so utterly forgot her, that, on his return to England, he never so much as asked whether she was alive or dead. I am sorry to speak so

harshly of your husband, Mrs Tyndall—a man I have reason, on all other accounts, to respect and like, and to whom I am greatly indebted—but since you compel me to do so, I must needs tell the truth.'

He need not have apologised so earnestly, for every word that he had said to her husband's discredit was welcome to Helen. It was a comfort to her to reflect, if Arthur had misunderstood their relative positions so far as to flirt with this inn-keeper's daughter in his youth, that riper years had at least brought with them a better sense of the fitness of things: that he had endeavoured to forget her, and succeeded. Upon the whole, her inquiries had ended more satisfactorily than they had at one time promised to do; but there was one thing yet that troubled her.

'I understand you to say, Mr Glyddon, that Arthur never communicated with this young person while abroad, nor revisited her when he returned to England? The first time he saw her, therefore, after that, must have been when we passed through Swansdale Lock in the barge?'

'I suppose so, madam—in fact I am sure of it.'

Helen was calling to mind how long that interview had lasted; how they had waited for Arthur by the river-bank; how Mr Adair had hastened to excuse him for his delay by a ridiculous story about 'shandy-gaff'—just such a one as a confidential soubrette on the stage would invent to account for her young mistress's peccadilloes; and how Mrs Ralph Tyndall had disdained that subterfuge, and confessed at once that Jenny and Arthur had been 'very old friends.' And then came the recollection of his disinclination to row up to the lock that night, doubtless for fear of seeing this girl. Why had he spoken to her at all? Why should he be afraid of seeing her? Was it possible that the sight of her had resuscitated his former passion, and made him distrustful of himself? The flame of suspicion thus kindled in Helen's heart leaped from point to point with terrible rapidity. He had sworn, it is true, on that same night that he had never loved another as he then loved *her*; but perhaps he had loved another *better*. There were no bounds to the deceit of man. Even the clergy themselves—*her* clergy—were accused of 'mental reservation.' What if Arthur had married her for her money, while in his secret soul he preferred another? Her heart became ice, her brain grew hot and dazed. What was that story about the money he owed, which she had offered to pay for him, and which, after all, there was no need to pay? What had he said to her in the summer-house, and, above all, what had he *meant* to say when he addressed her as 'Miss Somers?'

Even now, in the tumult of her wrathful suspicions, the sharp pain recurred to her which she had felt when he had called her by that name. She had thought *then* that he had meant something more than he had said, and now she was sure of it. These thoughts passed through her mind like waves in a troubled sea, which a strong wind moves rapidly. But near as instinct had brought her for the moment to the truth, she soon drifted away from it. She forgot, or perhaps she had been scarcely conscious of having employed them, the loving arguments she herself had used with Arthur on that very occasion; the worship she had paid to the mere mortal; the temptation

of her beseeching tones, of her passionate despair, her tearful beauty. And leaving these out of the account, it was hard to explain why his resolution to cancel their engagement had given way as suddenly as it was formed, if his love for her had had any other obstacle to overcome than pride. At all events, this comforted her somewhat; and she clung to it as the exhausted swimmer clings to some rock, and climbs it, glad, though it is not land, to find a foothold, and present safety from the cruel sea.

'Thanks, Mr Glyddon; thanks for your candour,' said she. 'I felt you would be a friend in whom I could rely. If I have been wrong in speaking to you, forgive me. I could not apply for the information I required to the only person who should be my confidant. But one word more. I have appealed to you as a clergyman, remember, as I had a right to do, I think, on such a matter; you will not repeat what has been said?'

'Most certainly, I will not, Mrs Tyndall; though I regret that— You have a new sketch-book, I perceive' (for the three gentlemen now made their appearance): 'I hope it is well filled with reminiscences of the beautiful Lake Country.'

EARLY MICROSCOPES.

It was during the seventeenth century that naturalists found themselves in possession of a marvellous instrument, the microscope. Thanks to it, a number of the most astonishing as well as unexpected discoveries succeeded each other, and revealed phenomena which had previously been considered impenetrable. This period, so famous in the history of the human mind, it is scarcely necessary to say, had been prepared by the studies of learned men; with their own unassisted sight, observers had already made great advances; and, in truth, the use of magnifying-glasses would not have been felt unless much knowledge had already been acquired.

In the course of the sixteenth century, ardent investigators resolved no longer to draw their instruction from the writings of the ancients, but from nature herself. To know exactly the organisation of man, became their ruling passion; the desire took its rise in Italy, but it was not long before it produced results that drew the attention of civilised Europe. Young surgeons did not consider their education complete without a visit to the Italian schools, and among these was one who acquired an especial reputation, and remained in his adopted country. This was André Vesale, who was born in Brussels in the year 1514, and was nominated a professor at Padua in 1540. When the faith in Greek anatomists was so firmly fixed, it required some moral courage on the part of the young surgeon to declare that Galen's descriptions did not apply to man, but to animals. At the age of twenty-eight, Vesale had finished his great work on the subject, which promoted him to the first rank among the founders of anatomy; the engravings illustrative of this work were so beautifully executed, that they have been attributed to Titian's hand. The celebrated university of Padua, wisely protected by the Venetian government, thus became a focus of talent. To Vesale, who was appointed surgeon-in-chief to the king of Spain, succeeded Colombo, Fabrizio, and Casserio. The first of these is celebrated for his researches on respiration

and pulmonary circulation. He describes the latter in a single page of a very small volume, with so perfect a precision, that, after having read it, it seems astonishing that the general system of the circulation of the blood was not discovered.

With the opening of the seventeenth century, the study of the phenomena of life was pursued with fresh energy. Observation and experience were proclaimed the only instruments of progress, and wonderful results shed an unusual clearness upon a variety of doubtful questions. The school of Padua had fallen into decay; Venice, occupied with her war against the Turks, had ceased to encourage science; but happily there were now many learned men spread over Europe. An English surgeon was to give proof of the most admirable penetration and solid judgment. William Harvey, who was born in 1578, determined to visit the schools of France and Germany, and above all to spend some time in Italy. For five years he attended the lectures at the university of Padua as a pupil of Fabrizio, and it may easily be believed that such a master would exercise a powerful influence over the far-seeing spirit of his disciple. Struck with the observations made as to the valvules and pulmonary circulation, Harvey conceived the idea of the circulation of the blood. All was prepared for the discovery, but if the man of genius had not appeared, it might have been long delayed. He examined the heart, shewed how the blood penetrates it, and is then forced into the arteries to flow over the whole body. One point only was wanting for the entire demonstration—and that was, how the blood passed into the arteries; this triumph was reserved for the first discoverers of the microscope.

For three years Harvey had publicly lectured on the circulation, and it was now believed that the whole organism of man and the higher animals was known. There was a general persuasion that there were only two kinds of vessels, veins and arteries, to the exclusion of nerves, which the ancients regarded as vessels. Suddenly, in 1622, a third kind of vessel was announced. The sensation was great. In the present day, the finest discoveries are received with much indifference, unless they lead to some great industrial issue; but in the seventeenth century, every time that the mind seemed to advance, it was made a subject for enthusiasm or vehement contradiction. Aselli, a professor at Pavia, having called some friends together, who wished to examine certain nerves in a dog, was astonished to find numerous white vessels covering the mesentery. Curiously enough, no person had previously observed them, from the fact that they are only to be seen after a full meal. They were the lacteal vessels, and the part they play in the body had always been ascribed to the veins. He, however, did not discover the whole truth; it was reserved for a Danish anatomist, who studied the lymphatic vessels with unheard-of perseverance, to find them in all parts of the body, and thus complete the knowledge of the vascular system in its perfection.

The passion for discoveries daily roused up many able thinkers, and an effort was made to bring into closer communication the scientific world. Thus arose societies and academies, which, in the seventeenth century, opened one of the most brilliant eras, and gave a prodigious impulse to research. They endeavoured to create facilities

for investigation, to establish correspondence with isolated savants, and to publish or spread their works. It was in the middle of this century that the Royal Society was formed in London, which soon made itself a name in modern civilisation. The sciences and the fine arts generally seek the support of nations who are in a position of peace and well-doing; yet there are sometimes epochs of great agitation, when the noblest minds abandon themselves to high aspirations, and dream of a greatness which makes them forget the ills with which they are surrounded. Such was the case with this Society; for it was founded in 1645, the very year of the battle of Naseby, which completed the ruin of Charles I. According to the words of their historian, some men of learning, curious about the things of nature, and of the new experimental philosophy, agreed to meet once a week to discuss such subjects. Popular troubles forced them to leave London and seek an asylum in Oxford; the Protectorate of Cromwell dispersed them, but when Charles II. returned to the throne, they renewed their meetings. The memoirs, which owed their first success to the zeal of the secretary, Henry Oldenburg, have appeared regularly ever since, and form an immense and precious collection, which will continue as long as science is cultivated in Europe. Its influence has been most extensive in carrying on active correspondence, purchasing the works of foreign writers, and giving a publicity to them which otherwise they would never have received.

Such a slight sketch of what had already been done in natural science was necessary before entering on the subject of the microscope. Its origin is as humble as it is possible to imagine. A globe of glass filled with water was the first to be used in early days; afterwards, the enlarging powers of transparent spheres and biconvex lenses as spectacles were discovered. The first idea of putting together more lenses than one is attributed to Roger Bacon, who lived in the thirteenth century, but there is no great certainty on this subject. We must look to the seventeenth century for exact information on the subject of microscopes. The earliest consisted of a little biconvex lens, framed in metal or wood, fixed on a stand; which was gradually improved by the addition of a large magnifying-glass, to concentrate the luminous rays on the subject to be examined, and a concave mirror, which threw it into a field of light. Afterwards, many lenses were arranged at the extremities of a tube, which, by the aid of a slight mechanism, can be raised or lowered towards the object, so as to gain the exact focus for distinct vision.

It would be assuming too much to say who should claim the merit of the invention of this instrument. Some think that an optician of the town of Middelburg, Zacharias Jans, constructed the first in 1590, but that the idea was suggested by a simple workman, John Lapprey. Others attribute it to Galileo; but that clever man, who made the telescope, only added some improvements to the microscope. Drebbel, a Dutch physician, has been named; but he only bought one, and bringing it to England, shewed it under the assumption that he was the inventor: it served as a model, however, from which to construct others. No sooner was it known and appreciated, than opticians

and naturalists tried to bring it to perfection. Eustachio Divini, of Rome, enjoyed a great reputation for his skill in working the glasses; but, from their dimensions, they could never be conveniently used, since they resembled small pieces of cannon. The single lens was much preferred by the greatest discoverers, as the number of lenses distorted the object. The imperfection of the lenses prevented the light penetrating into the instrument, and the objects seemed to be plunged in obscurity. There was, therefore, great scope for improvement, which has, indeed, been carried on up to our own day.

A professor of Bologna, Malpighi, contributed greatly to the scientific movement of this century, and his publications belong more to England than to Italy, as the Royal Society, with its accustomed liberality, printed them. Being a skilful anatomist, he examined the organs of the human frame. To other eyes, the lungs seemed formed of a spongy tissue, but he perceived that they were composed of a number of cells in continuation of the bronchial tubes; he saw that the blood sent out by the action of the heart circulated through the vessels of the respiratory organs, and passed from the arteries to the veins through a multitude of small canals, which are called capillary tubes. Hitherto, it was always supposed that the negro's skin was black; with the help of his wonderful instrument, he shewed this to be an error; their epidermis is as white as that of a European, the colour being due to the presence of a black pigment or tissue lying between the skin and the epidermis. Turning his attention to the insect world, he took in hand the silkworm in its larva state, and discovered the whole system of its respiratory organs. On the sides of the body, in this, as in every insect, there are small slits, surrounded by a border more or less thick and coloured; these orifices serve for the entrance of the air, and are now called stigmata. When this insect was examined under water, there was seen a system of marvellous aspect; the tubes, filled with air, divided into innumerable branches, and passed through every part of the body, which shone like silvery branches of exquisite delicacy. In the sides of the larger branches appeared a thread, turned spirally, giving them a resistance capable of supporting a strong pressure of air. Malpighi speaks with admiring delight of the beauty of the structure and the novelty of the observation.

Another important point was the existence of a heart among insects. Those who rear silkworms are well aware of an alternating movement of contraction and dilatation in the back, which is perfectly visible through the skin. Malpighi recognised this as the heart, but of a tubulous form, so different from the conical, which is usual in vertebrate animals. But where did that wonderful production of the silk find its origin? None had, so far, been able to ascertain. He marked the voluminous glands which form the precious material, and saw how the still semi-fluid substance reaches the small orifice, situated under the lower lip, from which it is drawn by the insect itself. A general notion of the organisation of the insect world was acquired by Malpighi's varied works, an immense progress for the lovers of science. It was now possible to compare it with vertebrate animals; the first step in the way of research which was to lead to the knowledge of animated creation as a whole.

Nor must Holland be forgotten in this work: small in extent of territory, as well as in the number of its inhabitants, it became renowned in this century by its struggles with the greatest powers of Europe, and its conquests in the East, as well as by the part it took in the scientific movements of the age. The investigators who contributed to the glory of their country, and turned their attention to natural science, were Leeuwenhoek, Ruysch, and Swammerdam; the first has been named the father of microscopic research. Those who have been spoken of before were true savants, men of great learning; Leeuwenhoek did not even know Latin, the language in common use among authors, yet he set himself to make the best microscopes, and then to use them as the most skilful of observers. He was a native of Delft, born in 1623, of parents who were obscure, and almost poor. At the death of his father he was placed, at the age of sixteen, as bookkeeper with a linen-merchant; but this employment pleased him little; he was already a votary of nature, and some learned friends led him to the knowledge of the instrument he loved. After a few years, he received the place of keeper of the Sheriff's room, which he retained for thirty-nine years, his time being at his own disposal, which explains the activity he shewed in his particular pursuit.

He always constructed his own microscopes, and the constant desire of improving them made him in the end the possessor of some hundreds. He never sold any, but occasionally gave one to a friend. His extreme care in the choice of glasses, and the remarkable perfection he attained in cutting and polishing them, produced the best results. These he reserved entirely for his own use, only displaying the inferior ones to his visitors; and when the Royal Society made a strong effort to learn the nature of his instruments, he either replied evasively or not at all; and nothing was discovered after his death to explain how he ground his lenses or chose his material. He was forty years old before his name had been mentioned out of his own circle of friends. A celebrated anatomist, De Graaf, brought a notice of him before the Royal Society; his observations were received by the members with the liveliest interest, and the isolated man, whose researches had hitherto been unappreciated, found himself encouraged to such a degree, that he pursued his work with unparalleled ardour. Examining everything that came under his hand, he transmitted, at short intervals, the result of his studies to London. His first communication was made in 1673; his last letter to the Society bears the date of 1717. He was then eighty-five years of age. At first, he had his letters translated into Latin; but afterwards he wrote in Dutch, and a translator was found in London. Having expressed a wish to be elected a member of the Royal Society, he was enthusiastically accepted; and to mark their sense of the honour they felt in enrolling his name, the members sent his diploma in a silver box, on which the arms of the Society were engraved.

Some of the discoveries he made, as they are told by the French naturalist, M. Blanchard, may be glanced at; they were so numerous, that it would be impossible to classify them all. Up to this time, it was believed that the blood was a red liquid; in reality, it is a nearly colourless fluid, holding in suspension corpuscles which are red.

It is not uncommon now, when a number of young people are gathered round a microscope in some drawing-room, to call forth exclamations of delight and surprise when the finger of some one is pricked, and the drop laid on the glass and thus magnified. There are the innumerable globules, each twenty-eight thousand times smaller than a grain of sand. Leeuwenhoek examined the transparent ears of the live rabbit, where he distinguished very clearly the passage of the blood from the arteries to the veins. In the membrane which unites the feet of the frog, the effect is very remarkable when seen under the microscope. The sanguine corpuscles having a much more considerable size than those of the mammifers, they may be seen as if dragged along by a rapid torrent. The fins of fish, and especially of the eel, present the same appearance.

Every one knows, in the present day, that myriads of animalcula abound in a drop of water. The announcement of this fact took the whole world by surprise; animated nature extended over limits infinitely more vast than had ever been supposed; life was found everywhere, and in the greatest profusion. Leeuwenhoek thus describes his discovery in the year 1675: 'I perceived living creatures in some rain-water which had been kept for some days; they seemed to me ten thousand times smaller than the aquatic insects which M. Swammerdam speaks of, and which can be seen with the naked eye.' He distinguished feet of incredible slenderness, moving with extraordinary rapidity, and in the interior of the body were eight or ten transparent globules. River-water, sea-water, and melted snow, were successively examined with the same results; and when he put pepper into pure water, the animalcula appeared in such numbers, that he estimated them at from six to eight thousand in a drop. It is interesting in the present day, when the subject of spontaneous generation has again been revived, to see how this great observer repulsed the idea. He remarks, that freshly fallen rain-water sometimes contained a few animalcula, which had been taken up from the dust which circulated in the atmosphere; but if that which contained no living organism were exposed to the air for two days, they shewed themselves in the greatest abundance. Melted snow was also free at first, but after a few days they also appeared in numbers. He it was who first observed the little creatures in vinegar, and the vibrations which are found in the tartar on teeth. At the request of the Royal Society, he examined the muscles, hair, teeth, and nails of the human being, and especially the optic nerve, which the ancients supposed to be hollow, so as to bring the objects formed on the retina to the brain, and which he proved to be a mistake.

After a calm life of study, Leeuwenhoek died at the age of nearly ninety. He had received visits from Charles II., Queen Anne, and George I., who were pleased to look through his instruments at various curious objects. The Czar Peter the Great also spent two hours with him, and other crowned heads did him the same honour. Naturalists began to think, after his death, that there was little more to be done, and that all had been discovered. Observers were rare, William Hewson, the surgeon in London, being almost the sole exception, and for a century the decadence of the science was much to be deplored. At the beginning of this century, however, the progress of optical knowledge

allowed of powerful microscopes being constructed with qualities before unknown, and their success has brought about new revelations.

WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY.

IN THIRTY-FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER III.

Fresh as a bridegroom; and his chin, new reaped,
Show'd like astubble-land at harvest-home.

At about half-past three o'clock on a cold December's day, you might have seen a neat and dapper little man crossing the quadrangle at Waterloo House, carrying a bundle of papers in his hand. He passed up the long sounding corridor of the western wing—the swing-doors opened for him, policemen saluted him, messengers touched their foreheads to him: to all salutations he affably rejoined; he had something to say to the head-porter, he had a cheery word for the head-messenger. All that labyrinth of blank doors and trackless staircases, so bewildering to the uninitiated, was to him as an open book. He paused before the door of a room marked 'Private,' gave a little tap, and entered. A good-humoured-looking man, who wore a bright silk scarf and a brilliant pin, looked up from his desk, and nodded.

'What's up, eh?' he said, getting up and poking the fire vigorously.

'There's a defalcation down in Wales,' said Number One.

'In Wales, eh? Well, it can't be much; that's a comfort: a quarter's stamp-duties for the whole principality wouldn't break the bank.'

'Ah! but this is a good lot—in the county of Caerinion: five thousand pounds!'

'Whew! That is a bad business! How the deuce did they come by it? Why, it would buy the fee-simple of the county, I should think!'

'It's through old Bogoak's legacy duties. He's a banker's son is the man down there; his drafts have come back to-day, "Refer to drawer."'

'Somebody ought to go down at once—without further delay.'

'Of course. But I've got nobody in my office who can go: you'll have to send somebody—somebody whose got some pluck about him; for they're the cocks of the county down there, and they'll be up to any dodge you please, to delay matters.'

'I think Robertson had better go: he's six feet two; and he's always practising with the gloves when he ought to be at work. He nearly drove Smith through the panel of the next room this morning by a tremendous upper cut he gave him. I was very severe with him—very—I'll send for him.'

Robertson was arranging his whiskers by the aid of a cracked piece of looking-glass, when a messenger told him the secretary wanted to speak to him.

'Another jobation, Smith,' said Robertson.—'Tell him I'm gone, Bob'—to the messenger. 'It's just a chance I wasn't, for I'm going down to Brighton to-night, and I shall lose my train if I stop jawing with old Scrubbles.'

'O come, Mr Robertson,' said Bob—he was the confidential adviser of the junior clerks, and, for the most part, had a mild pecuniary interest in their welfare.—'Come, Mr Robertson, now; it's no jawing, I'm sure; it's a nouting, I expect. There's

Mr Tanner with the secretary, and that generally means a nouting when one of you gents is sent for.

Robertson came back looking rather queer. 'I've got to go down into Wales by next train from Euston.'

Bob the messenger was still in the room. 'Indeed, Mr Robertson; and might I make bold to ask what part?'

'Abersomething—beastly hole, I expect. Aberhirnant,' he said, looking at a paper.

'Indeed, no, Mr Robertson, but a sweet pretty place. Who are you going to see at Aberhirnant?'

'I'm going to overhaul some chap called Rowlands.'

'What! Rowlands the banker's son?' cried the messenger.

'Eh! I don't know him,' said Robertson shortly—he began to think he had said quite enough—he had forgotten Bob Morris was a Welshman.—'I don't half like going, Smith,' he said, looking out of the window. The sky was overcast, and crowded with great swelling clouds, which the setting sun tinged with a smoky, copperish glow; a mist was coming down the river, so that the hideous girder spanning it was almost lost in the haze, whilst the noble proportions of the nearer bridge stood in bright and strong relief against the gathering darkness. A solitary steamer, its smoke encircling it like a pall, was paddling up and down on the brown and greasy tide, now rapidly on the ebb; the wind rose in gusts, and fell again as quickly, the windows rattling intermittently against their casements. A few tiny flakes of snow came sweeping up on the blast, and one settled on the window close by, expanding into star-like crystals, and then melting slowly away. Robertson watched the tiny drop of water making its way down the pane, turned, and shuddered. 'No; I don't half like going, Smith. I feel as if it would be an unlucky journey. Good-bye, old fellow.'

CHAPTER IV.

Alack the heavy day,
That I have worn so many winters out.

The Hen Doctor stalked into the bank as soon as the door was opened. He rapped with his thick oak stick on the counter.

'Good-morning, doctor,' said the banker politely, coming out of his office.

'Yah! a very bad morning, I think,' said the doctor savagely. 'I want my money—yes.'

'Money, eh! Ah, we can't do without that.—Fill up a cheque for the doctor, John.—What shall it be for?'

John was busy pouring out showers of gold from canvas bags. The banker was very civil to the doctor, because he had a large balance. He had been selling a farm lately, and had paid the purchase-money into the bank.

'How much have I got?' said the doctor shortly.

'John, what's the doctor's balance, eh?—You're not going to withdraw your confidence from us, I hope, doctor?'

'Yah! I never had any in you.'

'Ha, ha! O doctor, how fond you are of a joke.—Well, John, how much?'

'Two five sixty-nine eight four,' said John.

'Two thousand five hundred and sixty-nine,' said the banker.—'Now, John, sharp.—How much, doctor?'

'I want it all,' said the doctor.

'Leave fifty or so, doctor, to keep the account open?—No? Well, indeed, we're all short of money sometimes.—Make out the cheque, John, quick.—Gold, of course?—Look sharp, John.'

'Why, of course?' said the doctor. 'What do you want to take the words out of my mouth for? Perhaps I'll have gold—perhaps I won't. Is it full weight?'

'We can't guarantee that; you must take it as it comes.'

'But I'll have it full weight. Diaoul, it's my right! Isn't it my right, now?'

'Indeed, you shall have full weight, every grain of it,' said the banker in a rage.—'John, put down the scales here.—Now, sit down, sir—sit down, and weigh them yourself: the time of the bank, sir, can't be wasted with these vagaries.'

The old doctor sat down, wiped his spectacles, put them on; took the scales, looked at them narrowly, as though he suspected there were some deception about them—then, with shaking, fumbling fingers, he picked up coin after coin and weighed it carefully. At the end of five minutes he had weighed ten sovereigns. 'How long will it take me?' he said at last, looking up.

'Ha, ha, ha!' roared the banker and John in concert.—'Ha, ha, ha! Five minutes by the clock, and ten sovereigns counted. It will take you two days and a half. You'll send for your night-cap, doctor; you can sleep under the counter—ha, ha, ha!'

The doctor, with his hand, swept away the scales and gold. 'I won't do it,' he said.—'I won't take your gold; you must give me something else.'

'We can't give you notes; we can't spare 'em.—Can we, John?'—John shook his head.

'But I'll have 'em—I'll have notes if I want. You're bound to give 'em me; it's my right; isn't it?'

'I don't think we are,' said the banker.—'I don't think we are.—Are we, John?'

'I'm afraid we are,' said John.

'Then I'll have 'em—begad, I'll have 'em!' said the doctor. 'Hand 'em over directly, or I'll stop the bank.'

'He must have 'em, John, if it's the law.—Take your money, doctor; we've had quite enough of you; we should never get through our business if we'd many customers like you.'

John with alacrity handed over several bundles of their own notes—worn and dirty notes, which had made many journeys among the hills and valleys.

'Ah! these are something like,' said the doctor, counting them over—'nice dirty notes, that have been among 'spectable people, and must be good. I think I'll take 'em home and count 'em.—Well, thank you, Mr Rowlands; I think a good deal better of you than I did. Good-bye.'

When the Hen Doctor had gone, John went off into a paroxysm of chuckles.

Meantime, Arthur was sitting in his office, waiting for the post, in a state of almost ecstatic bliss. His dog-cart was at the door, ready to convey him and his sister Kate to Llanfechan; there he was to stay till the wedding came off: not at the Rectory, but at the Plas with Owen Meredith; and Owen had written to him to say that his coverts on the hills were swarming with woodcock, and that the marshes of Gwemhefim were alive with wild-fowl; so that Arthur promised himself a most delightful time, to be finished up by a time still

more delightful, of which he couldn't think without a tremor of eager joy, when he should be the absolute possessor of Mary Roberts.

He only waited for one thing—the post, which didn't reach the town till eleven, and was now nearly half an hour late. He didn't expect any communication of importance; but he would leave with a more perfectly easy mind, if he saw his letters before he went. Presently he heard the horn of the mail-van, and in a few moments his clerk appeared with the office-bag.

'Thank goodness! there's hardly anything.—"On Her Majesty's Service." Ah, that's about stamps. Take that to John at the bank. Stop, though; it's marked "Most urgent." What the deuce can be the matter?'

Arthur turned pale as he read it—pale, and then crimson. He put on his hat, and ran over to the bank.

'What does this mean, father?' he said, flinging down the letter before old Evan, who was sitting in his little room, sorting out papers.

The old banker took the letter and read it, and then looked up at his son.

'It must be some mistake, Arthur.'

'Mistake! But look, what a disgrace to me; my drafts returned, for five thousand—for the money I paid in to you a week ago. Father, it will kill me.'

'Don't be foolish,' said the old man, his face calm and placid, but his hands shaking and trembling; 'don't be foolish, Arthur. It's a mistake of our London agents—must be.—John!' he shouted to the clerk.—'John, you advised that remittance to "Brown and Bostock"—that remittance of Arthur's, five thousand odds?'

'Of course, I did, sir,' said John, coming in.

'There's been a mistake,' said the banker, getting up and shutting the door; 'that's all. Arthur's draft is dishonoured.'

'Dear me!' said John, looking scared. 'That's a bad job.'

'Bad job? Nonsense!' said Evan angrily. 'It's a stupid mistake of Brown and Bostock's.'

'But what am I to do, father?'

'Leave it all to me, Arthur. Give me that letter. There; I'll see to it, Arthur. Don't give yourself a moment's uneasiness. I'll send a telegram to Brown and Bostock, and put the matter right, and you shall have an ample apology. Leave it to me.'

Arthur had been accustomed to leave things to his father, and had usually found his account in so doing. His father's confidence reassured him; it could only be a mistake.

'You go on your way to Llanfechan, and see Mary Roberts; and give her my love, and tell her I've sent her a little present,' said Evan, putting a small morocco case into his son's hands; 'and don't worry yourself at all about business. I'll see to all that. Leave it to me.'

'You see what they say in the letter, governor—without further delay.'

'I see, I see. Oh, I know how to deal with these official people. I'll see to it, my boy; yes, yes, yes, without further delay.'

Arthur presently drove off towards Llanfechan, but he was shaken and anxious. It was all right, he knew; but he couldn't help worrying.

When his son had gone, Rowlands turned to John, his fingers clenched, his eyes distorted.

'The cursed knaves! I've dealt with them for forty years; I've had hundreds of thousands in their hands, and they dishonour me now for a few paltry thousands. What's the meaning of it? John, what does it mean?'

'Well, indeed, you knew you were overdrawn, Mr Rowlands, *bach!*'

'I couldn't have been; and if I were, they hold ample security; and you specially advised them that remittance was to meet Arthur's drafts. Confound 'em! I'll bring an action against them.'

'Is there time for that?' remarked John doubtfully.

After Arthur had started on his visit, old Evan walked up and down his room, holding his head between his hands. Could he yet save his son's position, by ruining the bank? No; he wouldn't do it; he would hold on to the bank at all hazards. That gone, all would be lost. Kate and Winny—what would become of them? The whole country-side would be ruined by his failure; farmers would lose their hoards, traders would come to a stop, the poor would lose their bread. No; the bank must be saved, even at the risk of Arthur's character. But surely there was some way out of it; surely he could delay and temporise with these official people, write and say that his son 'had duly provided for his drafts, but that by some mistake at his agents', who had not recognised the signature, they had been refused; request a little delay for inquiry. Yes, that would do; these public departments rarely acted with much vigour at first. He could surely gain time to realise enough to tide him over his immediate difficulties.

Just as he had commenced his letter to the Board of Stamps, John appeared in the doorway.

'Read this, master.'

It was a telegram, which a man on horseback had just brought over from Llanbelig junction.

LONDON.—From a friend to John Jones, of the bank, Aberlefeny.—Robertson, tall, fair, moustache, light overcoat, left W. H. this afternoon to overhaul A. R.'s footprints. Look out.

'What does it mean? Who's it from? It's nonsense! Footprints? What rubbish is this?'

'Suppose it means stamps, eh? Suppose it's from my friend Robert Morris, the son of the Popty, who's a messenger at Waterloo House.'

John ran forward to his master, whose head had sunk upon the table. He thought he was in a fit; but he recovered himself in a moment, and looked hazily at his clerk.

'What were we saying, John?' he went on. 'About Arthur's wedding, wasn't it? You're quite sure you ordered the bouquet from Shrewsbury—the most beautiful that money could buy? It's for the bride; and Arthur must do the thing well, you know, and has been a good lad, you know, John, and deserves— Good God!' he shrieked, getting up and clutching John's arm as the outer door opened with a great scroop—'Has he come?'

'S'hh! dear! Mr Rowlands, *bach!* S'hh.'

'Ah, it's only Miss Winny.'

'Yes, papa, I've come to take you out for a drive; you get so worried over these accounts, papa, that you're looking quite ill. It's a beautiful warm day. Let the poor people alone, papa, who owe you money—they'll pay in the end; let them alone, and come with me for a drive along the sands. After the storm, the air is heavenly.'

'I can't come, dear; no, indeed. I can't come; no, indeed, indeed! I'm so busy, dreadfully busy, just now. Would you mind sitting down for a minute? I'll attend to you presently; but just now these papers are — Wait and see, wait and see!'

'They're worrying you, papa, just so; and I shall take them from you,' said Winny, stretching out her pretty little well-gloved hand to push the papers from him.

'Leave them alone, girl,' he said fiercely, clutching at them. 'There, dear, there! don't be angry with your old father. I'm a good deal—yes, a good deal—John!' he cried, pulling himself together with a mighty effort—'John! take the carriage, and drive to Llanbelig Junction, and meet that gentleman we expect; and mind you bring him here to-night. Do you hear, John?—John,' he went on whispering to his clerk, 'you are my friend as well as my clerk; help me now, John! Keep this young man away for a day; drive him to Glandovey—anywhere—only don't let him come here. Go!' he shouted, as John stood irresolute.

CHAPTER V.

Remote from public road or dwelling,
Pathway or cultivated land;
From trace of human foot or hand.

At Llanbelig Station two trains from London daily stopped—the one a train corresponding with the night-mail from Euston, at 7 A.M.; the other at four in the afternoon. Had the correspondence of the 7 A.M. train with the night-mail been actual as well as theoretical, Robertson would have arrived at Aberhirnant early in the morning, long before the telegram from London reached the banker's clerk. But the mail was delayed; and Robertson had to spend the night in a signal-box, beside the pointsman's fire, in the middle of a howling wilderness of junctions and sidings, backed by mountains of slack and slag, and lit up by lurid sulphurous flames from hideous belching furnace-mouths. His first impressions of wild Wales were by no means favourable; and when he reached Llanbelig at about five in the afternoon, he was wretchedly tired, wearied, and disgusted with his journey, and praying only for rest and refreshment.

The station at Llanbelig was a wooden hut perched on the top of an embankment; behind it was a deserted slate-quarry; in front, the river Rhydol foamed and fretted in a bed of splintered rocks; whilst beyond the river, the ground sloped gradually upwards into round-backed, snow-covered mountains, whose tops were hidden by heavy lowering clouds.

When the train had passed on, the dense masses of smoke and steam emitted by its labouring engine, lit up by the last straggling rays of sunlight into a dim fuliginous glow, as it toiled up the steep incline, Robertson sat down on the top of his portmanteau and looked around. A melancholy looking man—a very hermit among railway porters—came and asked him for his ticket.

'How can I get to Aberhirnant?'

'Well, indeed, you can walk over the mountains—very bad way.'

'What conveyances are there?'

'There's a coach at seven in the morning; capital coach, sir; very good, indeed—yes, sir.'

'And when can I get a chaise or a fly?'

'You must order one the day before, from the hotel at Aberhirnant; very good hotel, sir—capital—yes, sure.'

'But I must get there to-night.'

'Well, you can't, unless you walk.'

'How far is it?'

'Eighteen miles—the mountain way, sir—very bad way, sir.'

Now, an eighteen miles' walk in the morning to Robertson, fresh and vigorous, would have been a very practicable and enjoyable thing; but to him, worn out and jaded, the prospect of eighteen miles over these bleak inhospitable mountains was unendurable. Just then he heard the beat of horses' hoofs, and saw, coming up the valley towards the station, a carriage and pair.

'Anybody for us, Johnny, *bach*? ' cried a dapper little man, jumping out of the carriage as it stopped at the foot of the bank.

'No one, unless this *gwrbonnedig** here belongs to you.'

'Dear, dear, we expected a gentleman too; but he hasn't come, it seems.'

The little man narrowly eyed this fair-haired, tall, young fellow, clad in light overcoat, who was sitting on his portmanteau.

'You seem to have missed your carriage, sir; can we give you a lift anywhere, sir?'

'Oh, if you would, I should be so much obliged. I want to go to Aberhirnant.'

'We are going that way, and will take you with pleasure.'

Robertson jumped into the carriage; his portmanteau was put on the top, the door was slammed to, and they were rolled swiftly away.

The contrast between the roar and rattle of the noisy train and the smooth easy motion of the carriage, had upon Robertson the effect of producing a sound and placid slumber. He noticed neither the flight of time nor the changes of the weather, but slept a most delightful, restful sleep.

When he awoke, it was with a start and a sense of coldness and misery. It was intensely dark, and quite still. Some moments elapsed before he could remember where he was; but when he did so, and found that the carriage had stopped, that his companion had left him, he let down the carriage-window in some amazement.

A great rush in upon him of snow and cold icy air made him put the window up again quickly. Where could he be? What could have happened? He felt for the courier-bag in which he carried the documents authorising him to take possession of Arthur Rowlands' stock and books: it lay by his side. He had fancied that it was hung round his neck by its strap when he went off to sleep, but he must have been mistaken. As his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he peered through the glass front of the carriage, and tried to make out where he was; but nothing was visible except the driving snow. The coachman had gone as well as his companion. There must have been an accident—a trace had broken, or the pole; or something had happened which had necessitated taking out the horses and going for assistance. They would be back again in a few minutes, no doubt; meantime, he would have a pipe.

The pipe was smoked out, but still no one came. Robertson fell asleep again, for how long he never

* *Gwrbonnedig*—gentleman.

knew; when he awoke, it was quite light. The snow had ceased; the moon was gleaming through the hurrying clouds: it was intensely cold—he could feel that—he would jump out, and see how matters stood. Clearly enough, the pole was gone; a bar was broken: they had taken away the horses, no doubt, to the nearest blacksmith, perhaps miles away. It would have been more polite had they awakened him and told him of the occurrence; but, after all, probably they meant well by leaving him to sleep through it. He was wide awake now, vigorous and refreshed by sleep: why should he sit freezing in the carriage till help came? He would push on, on foot.

Although, for the last few days, the weather had been warm and pleasant in the lowlands, yet on the high plateau on which, without knowing his bearings, young Robertson stood, the snow lay thick, massed into deep drifts by the wind, in the hollows of the rocks, in every sheltered nook. The fall that had just occurred had covered all the ground with a uniform sheet of white, so that the banks and drifts were undistinguishable in the hazy moonlight; but the fall had been so light, that the wind had swept it away from the raised causeway on which the carriage stood, and the road might be traced, a dark line waving upwards into the recesses of the hills, for miles ahead.

‘If I follow this road,’ said Robertson, ‘I shall surely come to Aberhirmant. I’ve no doubt it lies just over that rising ground in front. The carriage was going to Aberhirmant. If I follow the direction in which the carriage points, the track is plain enough; I shall surely come to Aberhirmant myself.’

The reasoning was good; but there was one fatal error in the premises. The carriage had been wheeled off the road, to avoid the chance of any other vehicle running into it, and on to a side-road, which pointed directly for the higher mountains. It was no mere cart-track, however, that Robertson took to. It was a hard paved causeway, which rang under his feet as he briskly stepped out, humming to himself some favourite tune—rang with a hard metallic ring in the sharp, frosty air. Fourteen hundred years ago, that road had echoed to the footsteps of the grim legionaries of Rome; and save for the passing shepherd, or the wandering tourist, no other footsteps had resounded upon it, till our hero began his perilous march, boldly striding forth along the Roman way.

He was upon the *Sarn Helen*.

Hours elapsed; the sky had clouded over again, the snow fell fast, the clouds were rolled away, the moon shone out; still the carriage stood black and deserted by the road-side, the driving snow gradually piling itself against it. There was no trace of footsteps now—no track visible on the waste; nothing but a white winding-sheet of snow, covering and concealing all. Utter silence and solitude brooded over the desolate hills. But in the very stillest and most solemn hour of the night, there appeared a light on the farthest verge of the gorge which led up to this plateau whereon the carriage stood, a light which gradually waxed brighter, till it became resolved into two lights; and presently there were heard—or would have been, had there been ears to hear—the ring of harness and the muffled beat of hoofs.

Soon a wagonette, drawn by four horses, drew up alongside the carriage; the leaders were the

horses which had been taken out of the carriage. In the wagonette were the coachman; John, the banker's clerk; a postboy, who was driving; and William Williams, the blacksmith.

‘Now, sir,’ said John, jumping out, and opening the carriage door. ‘We’ve been a long time; but we lost our way, indeed, and couldn’t get back to you. *Anwy! dad!* William! Thomas! The man’s gone! Where can he be?’

They all shouted and hallooed; but no sound came back to them; the very echoes were lost in the soft snow-folds.

‘Well, indeed,’ said Williams, ‘I believe she’s gone up the *Sarn Helen*. If she has, she’s lost; she never get back again.’

John threw himself on to the snow. The man was lost, then. On such a night as this the most skilful shepherd might fail to find his way; how much smaller the chance for an inexperienced traveller. And the death of the youth was on his head. He had never had any thought of hurting him; he only meant to detain him, to gain time; and now that he had possessed himself of his papers, he would have been harmless for a while. How terrible would be, not so much the death of the youth, as the ever-tormenting thought that would haunt him continually—the ever-accusing question his conscience would always reiterate!

John jumped to his feet. ‘Come, let us go and look for him; now, in a minute. You and I, William; you know the country, and all the paths.’

William shook his head. ‘I would not go on the *Sarn Helen* at night—no, not for hundreds of pounds.’

‘Why not? Come, William, *bach!* Come, *machgeni!*’

‘I will not come, John Jones. If you wish to get rid of your life, you can go.’

‘What danger is there?’

‘I will not tell you about the bogs along the *Sarn*—bogs where, if you miss the track, you sink like a stone in treacle. No; and I will not tell you of the mountain-side, where the track is broken away, and you step on the wrong stone—Poof! you drown in the pool at the bottom. No, my friend, I will tell you of nothing at all; but if you go that way, perhaps you meet *Helen*, eh?’

The men drew near him in awe.

‘Well, and if we met *Helen*?’

Williams shook his head. ‘I shall not tell you here; perhaps she hear me, eh? But for that *bonnedig*, you never see more but her bones—never. If she were my kinsman, I wouldn’t dare to look for her. *Helen* has got her up in the mountains. May the Lord have mercy upon her soul!’

‘Amen!’ said the others devoutly. They harnessed the two horses to the carriage, repairing the broken bars by ropes, and made their way slowly along the track by which they had come, shouting every now and then in shrill melodious calls, if haply the cries might chance to reach the ears of the lost. By the fitful moonlight, this dark procession, creeping over the snow-covered ground, seemed to take the likeness of a funeral; and these melancholy wailings, heard in the stillness of the night, might well have been the coronach of the departed soul.